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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4905
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3784
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000548

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR IO A/S BRIMMER
P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT
DOD/OSD FOR FLOURNOY/KAHL/DALTON
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT
OVP FOR HMUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: PSP LEADER WALID JUMBLATT CONFIRMS HIS
COMMITMENT TO MARCH 14

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) At a dinner hosted in honor of visiting NEA DAS Hale, March 14 Druze leader Walid Jumblatt said there were still some problems with March 14 candidate lists, notably in Beirut I and Keserwan. Jumblatt reaffirmed his commitment to March 14 and disclosed that a meeting for the coalition would be held soon. MP Marwan Hamadeh said March 14 lacks a good campaign, and added the release of the four generals had had a "boomerang" effect. Hale described a possible March 8 election victory as a "strategic failure," and reaffirmed that a two-state solution to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem is viable. Hale also lauded Saudi officials for their engagement in Lebanon. End summary.

¶2. (C) On May 8, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt hosted a dinner in honor of NEA DAS David Hale. Present at the dinner were Public Works and Transport Minister Ghazi Aridi, MP Marwan Hamadeh, vice-president of the Progressive Socialist Party Durayd Yaghi, and Mrs. Nora Jumblatt. The Ambassador, Pol/Econ Chief and LES Political Specialist also attended.

PROBLEMS REMAIN
WITH MARCH 14 LISTS

¶3. (C) "The final touches for March 14's lists are being made," Jumblatt said, but noted there were ongoing problems with Lebanese Forces (LF) leader Samir Geagea over the Armenian seat in Beirut I district, as well as on the Keserwan list. Jumblatt said Geagea is opposed to including former minister Fares Boueiz on the March 14 list in Keserwan. In addition, Geagea's insistence on including Richard Kouyoumjian, the LF Armenian candidate in Beirut I to the March 14 list, could pose a threat to the success of this list. "For the sake of history, we should praise Boueiz for being among the group of 29 parliamentarians who refused the Syrian dictate to extend former President Emile Lahoud's term in 2004," Jumblatt said. He further described Boueiz as a "heavy-weight," and added that Boueiz has ties to Qatar, as well as French authorities through Claude Gueant.

JUMBLATT STILL

14. (C) Jumblatt reaffirmed his commitment to March 14 and said that a meeting for the March 14 leaders would occur soon at Qoreitem to discuss the next steps. According to Jumblatt, the leaders would also discuss the possibility of holding a larger meeting for all of the coalition member's at the residence of Minister of State Nassib Lahoud. The purpose of the gathering would be to express March 14's solidarity with Lahoud, who withdrew from the race when he was excluded from independent MP Michel Murr's list.

MARCH 14 LACKS STRONG
ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

15. (C) Hamadeh called March 14's campaign advertisements "weak," while "Aoun's campaign is very aggressive in insulting his adversaries." Furthermore, he noted that March 14's campaign budget was depleted. Hamadeh underscored the importance of television advertising, and said March 8 figures had dominated television screens for the past two weeks. He complained Hizballah figures and Telcom Minister Gebran Bassil were seen on television much more than March 14 figures. Jumblatt said he would be a guest on the popular "Kalam al-Nass" ("talk of the people") talk show with Marcel Ghanem on May 28. He added that Ghanem is asking for USD 25,000 from every candidate who wants to appear on his talk show.

16. (C) Hamadeh also pointed out the relaunch of independent

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media outlet MTV was a good start for March 14. MTV's technical platform appealed to youth, while the popular network LBC appears to attract an aging audience.

RELEASE OF FOUR GENERALS
HAD A BOOMERANG EFFECT

17. (C) "The release of the four generals from prison had a damaging effect on March 14," indicated MP Marwan Hamadeh. He added, "It also had a boomerang effect." Hamadeh said people rallied around March 14 when they saw the four generals surrounded by notorious figures that reminded them of the Syrian occupation era. Jumblatt sarcastically predicted if March 8 wins, the following figures would be appointed as ministers: Michel Samaha for Foreign Affairs, Adnan Addoum for Justice, Jamil Sayyed, one of the four released generals, for Interior, Michel Aoun for Defense, and Nasser Qandil for Information. Jumblatt did not believe former PM Najib Mikati would be appointed Prime Minister because tough remarks made by pro-Syrian figure Michel Samaha suggest the Syrians would not support Mikati.

A MARCH 8,S VICTORY
EQUALS A STRATEGIC FAILURE

18. (C) DAS Hale described a possible March 8 opposition victory as a "catastrophic and strategic failure." Jumblatt cautioned that if March 8 wins, it would give Iran the upper hand in the region. Jumblatt also warned that if aid to Lebanon is suspended, including military assistance and Paris III money, Iran would fill the vacuum. Hamadeh said there was unspent money for projects never dispersed because the necessary approvals were not passed in parliament. Hamadeh believed a March 8 majority, to its advantage, would pass the necessary legislation and ensure the disbursement of this money.

STICK TO THE DOHA AGREEMENT

¶9. (C) Jumblatt said the only option available, in case of a March 8 victory, would be to side with President Michel Sleiman. He said March 14 should give the President the blocking minority in the next cabinet. Jumblatt defended his recent remarks that the 2008 Doha Agreement should continue after the elections, arguing the Doha Agreement was effective in reducing sectarian tensions. Jumblatt added he did not intend to give the opposition the blocking third in the next cabinet.

MARCH 14 MUST DO ITS HOMEWORK

¶10. (C) When asked by DAS Hale about how the U.S. could best support March 14, Jumblatt stressed the need for March 14 to "do its homework." On the other hand, Hamadeh said the international community should continue speaking about the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). Hamadeh cautioned that while pushing for the STL, the support should come in a subtle manner that would not politicize the Tribunal.

ISRAELI WITHDRAW FROM GHAJAR?

¶11. (C) Hamadeh noted the residents of Ghajar do not want to be under the Lebanese jurisdiction. For his part, Jumblatt criticized Israel's clumsiness in handling the issue of Ghajar saying that Israel is not helping March 14 when it claims it wants to withdraw from Ghajar to help the Siniora government.

TWO STATE SOLUTION VIABLE

¶12. (C) DAS Hale said a two state solution to solve the Palestinian-Israeli struggle was possible. Hale informed Jumblatt that Special Envoy Mitchell wants to integrate the

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Arab Peace Initiative (API) into his efforts and said the main issue for the Israeli public opinion is the perception that the API is non-negotiable and should be adopted in its entirety.

¶13. (C) Hamadeh cautioned that Lebanon cannot engage in direct negotiations with Israel, and added the issue of Palestinian resettlement is crucial for Lebanon. "Our only position is to stick to the truce agreement signed between Lebanon and Syria," Hamadeh noted. Hale responded that while the U.S. recognizes the problems facing Lebanon with regards to Palestinian resettlement, and that no solution would come at the expense of Lebanon, it is unrealistic to assume that all Palestinian refugees would return to their homeland.

SAUDI OFFICIALS REMAIN
COMMITTED TO LEBANON

¶14. (C) DAS Hale lauded Saudi leadership for its involvement in Lebanon and described his recent visit to Saudi Arabia as "very good." He said prior to his visit to the country, he was worried that Saudi officials would not pay attention to details in Lebanon. "My meetings with Saudi officials proved the opposite," he said. Hale said he met with Abed al-Aziz Bin Abdallah and Saudi Minister of Information Abed al-Aziz Khoja, and reported they were following Lebanon's details closely.

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